

July 29. 2015 9:22PM

# Opposition rallies at hearing for Kinder Morgan pipeline

NASHUA — Hundreds of people with signs, green ribbons and shirts expressing opposition to a controversial natural gas pipeline filled a city hotel on Wednesday to voice their concerns to federal regulators.

Telling representatives with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that the proposed Tennessee Gas Pipeline would harm the environment and negatively affect the state's rural character, residents and community leaders took turns highlighting how the project is not appropriate for the Granite State.



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Residents hold signs in opposition of the pipeline project on Wednesday in Nashua. (KIMBERLY HOUGHTON)

Several arguments against the pipeline were shared, including the preference for alternative energy as opposed to natural gas, worries about well and aquifer impacts, noise from compression stations, incineration zones near schools and more.

"We will address all of these issues in the environmental impact statement," reassured Eric Tomasi, project manager with FERC, adding there were already 3,000 comments on the record prior to Wednesday's meeting — possibly a record number of comments for any project reviewed by the organization.

"Why go through this lengthy environmental process when it hasn't even been decided if this project is necessary," said Charles Moser, a selectman from Mason who was one of nearly 20 elected officials to speak out against the pipeline. Receiving applause from the crowd, Mason claimed the project was a denial of equal protection under the law.

Susan Silverman, a Fitzwilliam representative with the New Hampshire Municipal Pipeline

Coalition, rattled off all of the region's water resources that would be impacted by the pipeline, including the Souhegan River, 22 brooks and streams, 13 aquifers, 11 ponds and lakes, 27 wetlands and vernal pools, 600 private wells and numerous municipal water sources and watersheds.

Kinder Morgan recently filed a new draft Environmental Resource Report with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regarding its proposed Tennessee Gas Pipeline Northeast Energy Direct project, which may travel about 80 miles through the Granite State if approved.

Because of the updated plan, several residents contended that the scoping process should be restarted, arguing that FERC should issue a new notice of intent and allow more time for the public to review the extensive document.

Wednesday's scoping meeting with FERC representatives was the first of its kind in New Hampshire. A second scoping meeting has been scheduled for 6:30 p.m. tonight at Milford Town Hall.

"I am here to give voice to the groundswell of opposition," said state Rep. Susan Emerson of Rindge, stressing the newly preferred route avoids several wealthy communities in Massachusetts and targets New Hampshire landowners already facing lower property values because of nearby power line corridors.

"This pipeline could be a disaster, from our standpoint," agreed state Rep. Jim McConnell of Richmond and Swanzey, adding Kinder Morgan is creating an illusion by continuously moving around the routes so that no one can get a clear fix on the full scope of the project.

The natural gas pipeline being proposed in the southern tier of the state has been reduced to a 30-inch pipeline option, according to Kinder Morgan's newest report.

"Our decision to proceed with the 30-inch pipeline option stems from continual outreach and dialogue that began in 2014, including ongoing negotiations with customers, reviewing various state initiatives designed to address the high cost and volatility of natural gas into the New England region, and continuing discussions with stakeholders," Kimberly Watson, Kinder Morgan East Region Pipelines President, said in a statement.

According to Watson, Kinder Morgan has made numerous adjustments to the proposed right-of-way in order to minimize potential impacts on towns and communities, resulting in about 91 percent of the Northeast Energy Direct market path segment being co-located along existing utility corridors.

"We are mindful of preserving the environmentally sensitive and aesthetically beautiful nature of the New England communities in which we operate and our employees live," Watson said

in a release. "Tennessee Gas Pipeline has maintained safe, respectful, mutually beneficial relationships with landowners along our existing pipeline right-of-ways throughout New England for nearly 60 years, and we are committed to continuing to do so."

The scope of the proposed pipeline has also been adjusted to reduce horsepower requirements at new compressor station locations, according to Watson, adding Kinder Morgan will continue to review routing alternatives as the pre-filing process moves forward.

"The best environmental impact is a no build," argued state Rep. Marty Jack of Nashua, maintaining the pipeline has no benefit for New Hampshire.

Several representatives from Merrimack stood and urged FERC to consider all of the dramatic impacts it will have on the town and the state as a whole.

Although Tomasi advised landowners to allow surveys of their property, Nancy Harrington, Merrimack Town Council chairman, said Kinder Morgan will not allow town personnel to be present during local property surveys.

FERC spent several hours listening to dozens of elected leaders and residents speak out against the pipeline.

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